

Council of the Great City Schools

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<http://www.cgcs.org>

March 2, 2000

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FCC MAIL ROOM

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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**SUBJECT: EXTENSION OF DEADLINE FOR USE OF FUNDS IN
PROGRAM YEAR 2 UNIVERSAL SERVICE "E-RATE"
PROGRAM - (CC DOCKET NO. 96-45)**

Dear Ms. Salas:

I write to you in support of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), which are included in a petition from the Illinois State Board of Education to extend the Year 2 deadline for use of E-Rate funding for internal connections. The current deadline states that all work on Year Two internal connections must be completed by June 30, 2000. The late arrival of CPS funding commitments from the E-Rate Program makes that deadline nearly impossible.

The E-Rate program is closing the digital divide in urban public schools across the country, including in the city of Chicago. The E-Rate program is part of Chicago's citywide \$2.2 billion capital improvement effort that is improving opportunity for all children. The school district, however, needs to review and coordinate all citywide projects, as well as the awards granted to many of our individual schools that received separate awards. This coordination is being done in compliance with guidelines provided by the FCC, USAC, and SLD. In addition, we understand that some individual schools did not receive notice of the awards until mid-November, 1999, making it difficult to implement the program in a thoughtful and intelligent manner.

The Chicago Public Schools are steadily implementing an aggressive Local and Wide Area Network (LAN/WAN) to link all of its 600 schools and service buildings to each other and the Internet through Illinois' ICN network. Some of these internal connections need to be left until the summer months to minimize classroom disruption and so that work can be performed during normal business hours. That is impossible with the June 30 deadline. Instead, the deadline means that the Chicago Public Schools faces higher labor costs while performing work during and after school hours, and on weekends or interrupted instruction. As it was, the Chicago Public Schools lost the summer 1999 construction season because of the late Year 2 funding commitments.

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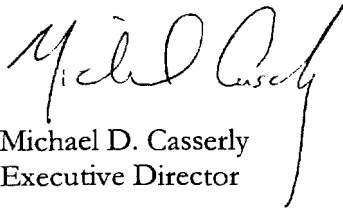
Council of the Great City Schools

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An estimated \$50 million of Chicago's estimated \$113 million in internal commitments for Year Two is in jeopardy due to the June 30, 2000 deadline. This would be a substantial loss for CPS, the third largest district in the nation with 86% of its students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Urban districts receive the greatest benefits from the E-Rate, and an extension of the work deadline would allow the E-Rate Program to continue this benefit to the neediest students.

The Council of the Great City Schools values the advancements the E-Rate has brought to urban education, and writes this letter to support further opportunities for the Chicago Public Schools to improve teaching and learning. We ask that you approve the Illinois State Board of Education's petition, and extend the deadline for Year Two work on internal connections to September 30, 2000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Casserly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name "Casserly" being more prominent.

Michael D. Casserly
Executive Director

CC: William Kennard, Chairman, Federal Communication Commission
Cheryl Parrino, CEO, Universal Service Administrative Company
Kate Moore, President, Schools and Libraries Division, USAC
Michael K. Powell, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
Glenn W. McGee, Illinois State Superintendent of Education